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AND PERSONALITY OF THE PREACHER

SOUL OF THE SERTION

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## THE SOUL LO

OF THE

## SERMON

AND

#### THE PERSONALITY LO.

#### OF THE PREACHER

BY THE

## Rev. JOSEPH DAUSON.

"I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than to be one of the twenty to follow mine own teachings."

SHAKESPEARE.

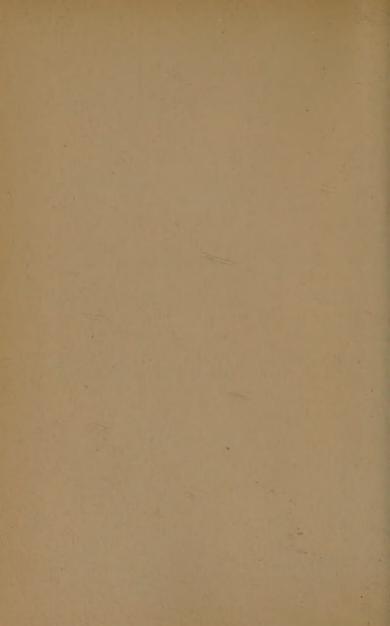
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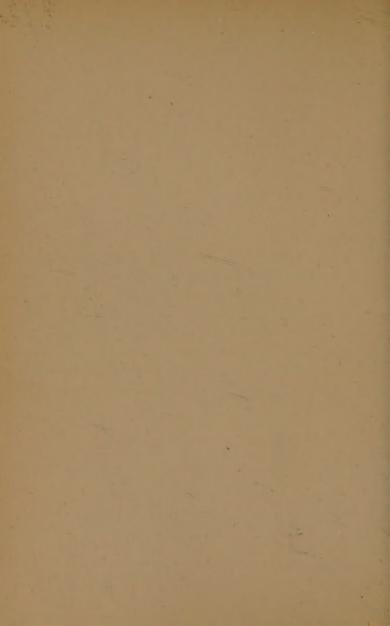
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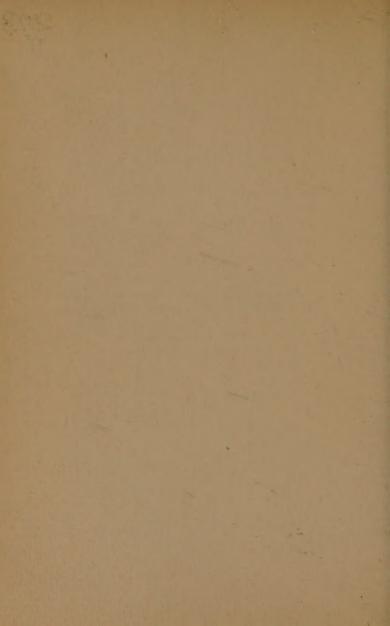


#### NOTE.

The Soul of the Sermon is placed first in the present booklet solely because it now sees the light for the first time. The Personality of the Preacher—which met with a gratifying reception on its appearance last year, and which is here reprinted because the first edition is practically exhausted—would otherwise have been given precedence on logical as well as chronological grounds. The reader will, therefore, do well to take for his motto—"The last shall be first."



## THE SOUL OF THE SERMON.



I watched a lame old sermon wander round
The crowded nave and aisles in search of rest:
Of mind or heart it fain had been the guest,
But closed were all, no home for it was found;
So, faint and lone, it sank upon the ground,
And moaned, with shame and 'whelming grief opprest,—
"I might have burned as fire in some great breast,
Had life been mine as well as wings of sound."
So wept the sermon there in helpless woe,
Beneath the congregation's heedless tread,
When, had the preacher, ere he bade it go,
His soul's own might throughout its sinews spread,
With force of Arctic ship that rends the floe.
It swift had stirred the quick, and waked the dead.

"The soul never grows old."-Longfellow.

"The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul."—Emerson.

"I have a soul that, like an ample shield,

Can take in all, and verge enough for more."

—Dryden.

"For of the soul the body form doth take;

For soul is form, and doth the body make."

—Spenser.

"From soul to soul, o'er all the world, leaps one electric thrill."—Lowell.

### The Soul of the Sermon.

shall not be surprised if in this incredulous age, when men are prepared to doubt everything save their own wisdom, or other people's folly, there are irreverent spirits ready to question whether sermons have souls at all; or to suggest that they are of such a tenuous and evanescent nature as to remind them of the souls of animals, not yet evolved, or of the souls that have attained to rest in Paradise which, according to one theological theory, will remain in a state of slumber till the Judgment Day.

There may be ground for this scepticism. There may be stray specimens of homiletic literature so belated as never to have arrived at the consciousness of soulhood in themselves, or to have evidenced that consciousness to others, but fortunately all sermons are not alike. They

differ as widely as the men of whom they are born. Some there are, certainly, in which the dullest eye will detect the quiver and gleam of an inner life. In a recently published volume—

Addresses spoken to Working Men from Pulpit and Platform—the Dean of Rochester says:—

"I have been told that a man, said to be of unsound mind, attends a church in one of our great cities, and that when the curate, who preaches briefly and impressively, is in the pulpit, he listens with unflagging attention; but when the vicar begins to read a long and dreary discourse, he takes off his boots and puts them outside the pew, to intimate that he is probably there for the night, and wishes to have them cleaned."

After that, the cynic who questions whether any sermon is large and vital enough to guest a soul, will have to confess that even a man of fractured wits may be gifted with greater insight than himself.

In the lexicography of our language the word soul has a considerable latitude of signification. It may mean the immaterial, immortal part of man, or the moral and emotional part of our nature, or the essence of a thing, or the inspiration of an enterprise, and so on. All the needful purposes of this paper will be served if I define

it as the glowing point in which the rays of intellectual and spiritual life find culmination. Where these rays shine not, soul has departed or not yet arrived. "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Life is a sine qua non. However choice and subtle our other ingredients, under no manipulation of psychological chemistry can soul be produced where life is omitted. The life may not be always operant, but it is always there.

The soul of the sermon, then, will be the vital principle of the sermon, that which marks it off from the dead, that which gathers up its individuality, that wherein lies its breath and pulse and movement. A sermon from which soul is absent is a sermon that simply exists, a manufactured article, rather than a living organism.

In treatises on preaching, much attention is usually given to the outward shape or body of the sermon. It must, of course, have a body, and that body may be of the most varied form and construction. The shape in which the prophesying spirit incarnates itself for the edification or mystification or wearification of the hearer may be

expository, or topical, or doctrinal, or practical, or hortatory, or controversial, as circumstances demand or the mood and will of the preacher dictate. This "clothing upon," however, is of secondary interest, provided always that the vestments are of the preacher's own making, and not such as he has stolen from another's wardrobe. Far more important than the tabernacle is the Shechinah that is to blaze within it. Indeed. it will generally be found that, as in nature the life shapes the organism, so, in normal conditions, the soul within it shapes the sermon. Whatever its outward form, whether of common mould or of aristocratic build, if the sermon be one that issues from the living, and is destined to reach the living, it will be possessed of an inherent life, a vital and mastering individuality, a something of which we can give no better account than to call it soul.

To crystallise in a sentence what this soul consists of would be difficult, and perhaps not desirable; for hard-and-fast definitions have a knack of leaving better grain outside, or straggling untidily from the sheaf, than is enclosed within

their circling band. When the truth to be expounded is large and mystic, richer harvest of insight is often caught from words that are simply flung at it, and that rebound with impress of its life and colour, than from phrases that essay to clasp it round and suck its blood.

I have emphasised life, and I now go on to point out that a further characteristic of soul is its penetrative and quickening quality; its power to discover and rouse into more vivid consciousness other souls. It is the great diviner. Its magnetic blade can penetrate the thick walls of insensibility, and pierce to the quick the life that hides within. And at its touch that hidden life is not only revealed, but stirred, and enthused with a more passionate realisation of its own capabilities. Soul is thus a sort of intellectual and spiritual Columbus, discovering new soulworlds, and flashing upon the inhabitants of these new worlds a recognition of the undreamed-of resources that await development in the lands around. A sermon that manifests this power, a sermon that braces the soul of the listener like a fresh breeze from the everlasting hills of Truth, a sermon charged with royal and resurrective energy, awakening new ideals and summoning to new obedience, a sermon that comes to the hearer as Christ went to the grave of Lazarus, with sympathy and hope for the living and a gift of fresh white days for the seeming dead, a sermon the magnetic touch of whose inner life discovers easily its kindred life in the congregation, and bids that kindred life leap into a self-revealing blaze,—such is the sermon in which soul lives and moves and has its being.

This quickening touch of soul on soul, common to the experience of the poet as well as of the preacher, is happily described in a recent short poem by Norman Gale, entitled—

#### INSPIRATION.

I lay my head on the foolscap page,
Bidden to sing, and being mute;
No help there came with the lovely air
Of the blackbird's magic flute.

My Love ran in, and she kissed my cheek, Lyrics woke in my blood and rang; Her hair glowed gold by the foolscap page, And the barren singer sang.

Under the great ribs of the earth there lie hidden leagues of buried sunlight, sunlight that once lent the glory and freshness of its life in myriad dancing and flashing gleams to the mossgrown trunks and spreading brushwood of the vast wildernesses of primeval luxuriance, but that sleeps now in the heavy silence of the sombre coal. Yet that coal is not dead. Bring the focussed rays of the sun to bear upon it—the touch of the life from which it sprang and to which it still belongs—and as it feels the contact of kindred fingers it will live again in heat and flame. The sunlight of to-day finds and quickens the sunlight of yesterday; and so does soul find and quicken soul.

This, however, is only saying what the soul of the sermon does; it is not describing, save inferentially, what the soul of the sermon is. The question that waits for fuller answer is— What is that mysterious something in the sermon that discovers a kinship of life, and awakens a wider vision of the possibilities of that life in the soul of the listener?

I asked a lady this question not long ago.

- "What is the soul of a sermon?" I inquired.
- "That which finds and moves the soul of the

hearer," she answered.

"Good! But wherein lies that quality of the sermon that so finds and moves? Is it in its construction, or in its style, or in its delivery?"

"In neither," she replied. "The soul of the sermon lies in the thought it sets itself to utter."

That was the answer of a wise insight, but it hardly states the matter with completeness. The thought or truth which the sermon sets forth is doubtless an essential part of its soul, but there must be something more. Truth as a mere objective statement of fact is not sufficient. Every sermon worthy of the name will be the presentation of some truth concerning God or Man; but the bare enunciation of that truth, or even its substantiation by argument, or its elucidation in exposition, or its enforcement by direct and personal appeal, is not enough to give the sermon a soul. To create such a soul as I am seeking to define, we require not only truth or fact in itself, but truth suffused and energised with life.

All truth, of course, is living; especially that truth of God with which the pulpit is more immediately concerned. It is living in the sense

that it is charged with divine potentialities, that in its heart the energies of a divine life lie latent. In presenting this truth, however, the God-life within it must be warmed and vivified by contact with the vital breath of the preacher's own soul. It is no derogation of those eternal verities which have been entrusted to us to insist that they must be vitalised in the flame of the preacher's personality. In the Bible there is the blending of a double soul—a soul human and a soul divine. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." There is the human lip, and, resting on it, the divine word; and to be able to transfer this double life from the Bible to the souls of others we need to permeate it with both the divine and human element in ourselves.

There is a difference worth reflecting upon between reading an author and listening to the voice of a speaker. In reading the Bible, or any living book, we often feel the soul of the writer to be in direct and vivid communication with our own. Isaiah, Paul, or John, or even a Plato, or a Wordsworth, or a Browning, may send the vitalising throb of his own spirit palpitating

through ours. But in listening to an expounder of these men the experience is different. Here we have the intervention of another personality between the mind that gave primal utterance to the truth and our own, and such intervention may be opaque or it may be transparent; the intervention of darkness, thrusting the original inspiration into deeper shadow, or the intervention of light, lifting it into more glorious illumination.

In the ruined wall of Tintern Abbey, at the western end, there is a large and nobly fashioned window, through whose open spaces may be caught an inspiring vision of sky, clear in stainless blue, or gorgeous in sun-woven vestures of purple and green and gold. Imagine the abbey rebuilt, and the window restored. One-third of its spaces we will suppose to be filled with ordinary glass, another third with semi-transparent horn, while the remainder glows with panes of richly variegated colour. You can see in a moment how the relation of the light outside to the beholder within would be greatly affected. Now as that window would take the light, so the preacher takes the truth and transmits it to his

21

hearers—cold and clear, or dimmed and darkened, or glorified with the hues of his own rich and conquering personality.

The soul of the sermon is not truth lifted mechanically out of the Bible and dropped unaffected into the mind of the listener. It is truth which has first entered into the soul of the speaker, sharing and intensifying his own inner life. In the history of the preacher, as in the history of the Christ, there must be an incarnation before there can be an exaltation; the Word must be made flesh before the Son of Man can come again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Truth, to be effectual, must be absorbed and lived, before it is proclaimed. A man may make a collection of Scripture passages, or extracts from a Biblical commentary or a theological treatise or a volume on ethics, or, in the stress of an intellectual penury too feeble even to select and purloin, he may purchase manuscripts in the market; but no such productions, however attractive or imposing their outward frame, can be classed as sermons that have a soul which they can venture to call their own. Their voice

will be as hollow and ineffectual as the rattle of the bones in an ancient vision, which were altogether powerless and very dry until the breath from the four winds came and set them on their feet, an army of living men.

In common parlance we speak of making sermons. Therein lies dangers of serious misunderstanding. A living sermon cannot be made, as a brick, or a spade, or a chair is made. It must be created, and a brief but accurate description of creation is—the coming forth of being from being, the evolution of soul from soul.

"Deep crieth unto deep" in this matter. The spirit that is in the truth lays hold of the spirit that is in the man, and each entering into and invigorating the other's life, a soul is born of the union that goes forth in living speech to arouse and expand the soul it finds in others. Of this process we have significant illustrations in Scripture. Christ says, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Jeremiah says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." To Ezekiel, on the threshold of his prophetic

mission, it was said, "Son of man, eat that thou findest: eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel." John also says, "And I took the book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up. . . ." "And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." What are all these instances but a symbolical setting forth of the great lesson that before a man can give effectual utterance to the truth, it must have become the assimilated sustenance of his being? "He is first commanded to eat the book, and only after that commissioned to carry its message to the kings and nations to whom it was to be addressed. In other words, the prophet who is to declare its contents must believe them and become them first. The truths by which he is to renew the life of the world must previously be the nourishment of his own." The preacher must be what he speaks, and on a lower level, but along a similar line of meaning has a right to say with his Master, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

In one of the lectures of F. W. Robertson, we

are told that in a certain town in America there is a statue of a sleeping boy, which is said to produce a singular feeling of repose in all who gaze upon it. The history of the statue is as follows:-"The sculptor gazed upon the skies on a summer's morning, which had arisen as serene and calm as the blue eternity out of which it came: he went about haunted with the memory of that repose-it was a necessity to him to express it. Had he been a poet he would have thrown it into words; a painter, it would have found expression on the canvas; had he been an architect, he would have given us his feelings embodied as the builders of the Middle Ages embodied their aspirations, in a Gothic architecture; but being only a sculptor, his pen was the chisel, his words stone, and so he threw his thoughts into the marble."

The lesson of the incident is this, that the repose was in the man before it was in the marble. The sculptor embodied and realised the feeling so perfectly in himself, and then projected himself so completely into the statue that all who gaze upon it now feel his spirit to enter



into and subdue their own. That is what I mean by the soul of the sermon. It is the incarnation of the preacher's own being in the words he utters, after that being has been permeated and vitalised with the truth he endeavours to expound and enforce, and which now goes forth from him as the herald of a new and fuller life in the souls of others.

At this point my words might fittingly come to an end, were it not that, arising out of the foregoing exposition, there is a great practical duty, the enforcement of which it would be almost criminal to avoid. If what has been advanced is correct, then it follows, as an inevitable conclusion, that as the soul of the preacher is, so will the soul of his sermon be. Its dimensions, its strength, its vitality will be determined by the measure and quality of these characteristics in their author. A man of small nature will never produce a great sermon, for the very simple reason that as a parent he has so little to bestow upon his offspring. Indeed, small natured men should never be allowed to preach, any more than a Hottentot should be set to interpret Beethoven or Wagner. Such preachers show their hearers a dingy ceiling instead of an open sky; make them paddle on a pond when they might be scudding across an ocean. They are retail hucksters of the higgling class. They dispense the little truth they are capable of assimilating in small packets, tied with feeble thread, and stamped with the impress of their own Liliputian qualities. It is these exiguous pettifogging dealers in sacred things that have helped so much to produce for us the small God, the small Bible, the small life, the small past and present and future that one can hardly move without treading upon in many religious circles. On the other hand, the sermon of a man of finely statured qualities, a man of height and breadth, a man of magnitude and magnanimity, a man whose soul is a continent, and not the churchyard of a country parish, will as inevitably partake of his greatness as in the ancient mythologies the children of the gods inherited the divinity of their parents.

In the matter of personal endowment, the possession of commanding qualities, birth does not

283

by any means place all men on the same level. There are those who enter on this mortal scene with a nature as richly sown with potentialities as the seeds lie thick in the soil of a primeval forest. Their nature is a songful prophecy, needing nothing but time to make it break into music. A whole army of possibilities sleeps within them, dormant only until the bugle call of circumstance bids it leap into action and fight its way to victory. In others there is only an awkward squad of the achievable, meagrely accoutred, and with but faintest heart for march and battle. The territory of their being is small and the area open to cultivation exceedingly circumscribed. Their nature is like an Irish holding snatched from the unpropitious grasp of the surrounding bogland, of scanty dimensions, and pitiably stinted in possibilities.

Nothing is more commonly overlooked in religious teaching generally, and in the advice given to preachers in particular, than this variety of original endowment. In the exhortations addressed to men from the pulpit and elsewhere, it is almost invariably assumed that human beings

start from the same level of advantage or disadvantage, and can be made to touch the same goal of achievement. Experience cries out in loud tones that it is not so. The law of variation is at work here as throughout the rest of nature, and were all planted in the same environment, the subsequent growth would manifest innumerable points of difference. Some preachers are placed on high vantage ground by their fairy godmothers on their first birthday. Their natural stature is so tall, and their earliest contact with the ground takes place on so lofty an eminence that hardly any up-reaching of the arms is required to enable them to touch the stars. Their feet are on the Andes and their head in the Milky Way when the drama opens, while others, alas, are so lowly placed and so inadequately endowed that mountain and sky never become more to them than a far-off dream. There are preachers who have a nature rich as a tropical forest with wealth of flowers, gleam of plumage, might of trees, roar of beast, and vast cool mysteries of moss-grown rock and twisted roots, where darksome waters dream and shadows sleep unstirred

by finger touch of light. The soul that such men put into their sermons will be spacious, kingly, awe-inspiring, a soul of regal mien and royal speech. It is only the few, however, that are so munificently equipped by nature, and hence the question arises—Can the small be made larger? Can the limited gain expansion? Or, more practically, how far can human personality be carried by cultivation beyond the boundaries set by birth?

Pursuing the problem along the line of method let us inquire by what means we can, as preachers, win for ourselves a larger, healthier, richer soul. Analogy may not be an untrustworthy guide. Consulting her, we find that the body grows in size, in symmetry, in vigour the more it is in harmony with its environment, the more it extracts from that environment the elements capable of supplying the highest nourishment. Shall it not be so with mind and spirit? Shall they not attain fullest vigour when brought into most melodious accord with their surroundings, and when best able to absorb and assimilate from their surroundings the choicest nutriment? The

most imperial personalities uplifted by history for our contemplation are the personalities which have brought their environment most fully under tribute, which have laid the strongest grip on surrounding circumstances, and out of its stones made bread, and in its most penurious wildernesses gathered quails and manna. As an illustration, think of the myriad-minded Shakespeare, so many-sided, so absorbent of the influences around him that Emerson can justly say:-"We have his recorded convictions on those questions which knock for answer at every heart-on life and death, on love, on wealth and poverty, on the prizes of life, and the ways whereby we come at them, on the characters of men, and the influences, occult and open, which affect their futures; and on those mysterious and demoniacal powers which defy our science, and which yet interweave their malice and their gift in our brightest hours. . . What point of morals, of manners, of economy, of philosophy, of religion, of taste, of the conduct of life, has he not settled? What mystery has he not signified his knowledge of? What office, or function. or district of man's work has he not remembered? What king has he not taught state, as Talma taught Napoleon? What maiden has not found him finer than her delicacy? What lover has he not outloved? What sage has he not outseen? What gentleman has he not instructed in the rudeness of his behaviour?"

The quality, then, which must be cultivated by every preacher who means to make of himself a larger, stronger man, and thus to pour the current of an ampler, more vigorous individuality into his sermons, is *Sympathy*, intelligent, assimilative sympathy with all that constitutes his physical, intellectual, and spiritual environment. It is wealth of being that is required, and wealth of being can only be obtained as the Atlantic obtains wealth of water, by opening its heart to all the bounty of the sky and all the benefactions of the shore.

The preacher must cultivate

#### I. Sympathy with Nature.

There spreads around us day and night a vast universe of matter and motion, ever assuming new aspects, ever developing new forces, the earth with its treasures, the sky with its marvels, the sea with its mysteries; a pictorial embodiment of the thoughts of God, or, more accurately, an organ played upon by his fingers, and giving out music the harmonies of which are too deep and vast as yet for mortal comprehension. Shall we be blind to the beauty, shall we be deaf to the music? Shall we not rather let the gleam of the one, and the sweep of the other illuminate and expand the chambers of our spirits?

Ours is the age in which Nature is having accorded her a more reverent and patient attention. Never did science scrutinise her so keenly, never did art depict her so lovingly, never did literature enter with such interpretive sympathy into her phases and moods, never did religion recognise her so clearly as the temple in which may be heard the tread of divine feet, the rustling of the robes of God. To all this the Christian preacher should be alive and responsive. With the methods, aims, results of natural science he should, as far as circumstances will permit, make himself acquainted, not to decry them from the pulpit as atheistic and

profane, but to reverence them as the new hands which men are stretching into the unseen, and wherewith they often touch unconsciously the responding fingers of God. With art also and literature, in their endeavour to understand and delineate the physical universe, he should enter into loving converse, eager to catch the faintest interpretation of that silence or speech of the Divine Mind that sleeps on the face of night and murmurs on the lips of day. And with Nature herself shall he not be on terms of holy comradeship? As the restorer of wearied body and jaded mind, as the rough-handed mother who pelts him with a blurt of ocean spray, or a sweep of moorland mist, or a burst of warming sun, or a dash of mountain wind; as the inspirer of thoughts and visions that never waken in the best-appointed study, amid the choicest speech of books, he must cultivate a friendship with Nature; and often, when other eyes are hard and vacant, his will moisten with a high-born joy as he stands before her with bared head and unshodden feet-distant follower of him who howed before the bush in the midst of whose

burning there blazed the awful form of God. Every preacher who desires his personality to be not a scanty runlet out of which the glare of life has licked up almost the last despairing drop, but a rich cool river fed by brooks that have shouted on mountain sides, and whispered in woodland dells, and dreamed on boggy moors, and chafed in rocky caves, will respond to Wordsworth's call, though he may not subscribe to the full measure of his sentiment:—

Come forth into the light of things, Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood May teach you more of man, Of moral evil and of good, Than all the sages can.

#### II. SYMPATHY WITH LIFE.

If it be desirable for the creation and maintenance of a larger soul to live in sympathy with that part of the physical universe called Nature, it is equally, nay much more, desirable to be sympathetically related to the vast mysterious complex movement of human beings, which we sum up in the word *life*—that beautiful, awful thing which, in Shelley's phrase,

Like a dome of many-coloured glass Stains the white radiance of eternity.

Or which, as Tennyson tell us,

is not idle ore,
But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipped in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom
To shape and use.

There should be in all of us something of the feeling of Carlyle when he writes:—"Truly the din of many-voiced Life, which, in this solitude, with the mind's organ, I could hear, was no longer a maddening discord, but a melting one; like inarticulate cries and sobbings of a dumb creature, which in the ear of Heaven are prayer." To stand in quiet meditation in the great temple of life, listening to

The still, sad music of humanity, catching from its melodies, muffled and clear, rude and tender, accordant and inharmonious, sympathy, guidance, inspiration, this must be the way of every man who would redeem his nature

from the blight of barrenness and inadequacy.

This is the way the Master went,

Shall not the servant tread it still?

The human nature of Christ was the fullest and deepest of which the world has yet had experience. It was the many-stringed harp from which every other nature could strike chords that thrilled in unison with its own. And how was its vastness of sympathy attained? Not by isolation, but by laying itself open to the inflow of great currents of experience from all quarters. Christ's nature was not a pitcher lifted brimful out of the divine ocean at his birth. It was left for life to fill, as in the case of all men. It doubtless had richer potentialities than any other, but those potentialities required the contact of human environment to develop them; and it was because life seized them at so many points, and evoked from them such varied response, that they attained to so rare fruition.

For the enlargement of human souls nothing is so potent an influence as fellowship with men and women, sympathetic outgoing of mind and heart with the great facts and forces and move-



ments of human experience. And life was never so brimful of interest, either as a problem for the brain, or an outlet for the heart, or a battle for pen and lip and hand as it is to-day. The thought that directs and governs its development has taken an entirely new direction. The gaze of humanity has been lowered from the heavens to the earth, from the stars to the street. It no longer stands with enraptured vision gazing after an ascended Christ, but seeks earnestly to find and brighten His image in the bodies and souls of the poor brethren he has left behind him in Jerusalem. I do not mean that humanity is growing materialistic, but that it has been awakened to an altogether exceptional interest in the present world and in the life that is around us here and now. The healthy earth-love of the Greek is mingling with the sky-gazing of the Hebrew. Other-worldliness is not in such great demand; for men have grown to feel that to have the kingdom of God set up within them and around them may perhaps, after all, be better than relegating it to some Utopia in a future state.

As the result of this intensified regard, life is gaining an enhanced sacredness. The nearer look may have revealed more of its meanness, but despite the poverty of much of its aspect, men are more than ever impressed with the solemn music of its movement, and the divinity that lies at its heart.

The width and practicality of the outlook on life to-day is very encouraging. It is not confined to the contemplation of a section or a class, but takes a sweeping survey of the interests and necessities of the whole people, and aims, not only at delivering their souls from future penalties, but at uplifting their whole being—body, soul, and spirit, and that in the present world as well as in the next—into more wholesome and divine conditions.

This vast territory of life, this mighty movement and turmoil of human thought and feeling and action, with its diversified tendencies—realistic, æsthetic, spiritualistic, humanitarian—is but very partially understood. It is a dark continent, and there are many who dread to join the expeditions needed to explore it. They linger timidly on

the shores of a civilisation with which they have grown familiar, reluctant to commit themselves to the untrodden swamps and forests, the untraversed rivers and lakes of the new era. Nor is it demanded of every one that he shall be an explorer. That is reserved for the intrepid foot and dauntless eye of the adventurous few. But what is expected of all living men, and especially of those who stand forth as teachers of others, is that they shall not be entirely out of relation and response to the life around them. Its literature should not be to them a strange voice, nor its social and political movements things on which they bestow no thought. No greater enfeeblement can overtake a preacher than to let slip the cords that link his mind and heart to the life he is trying to reach and mould. To know Judea but not Britain; the life of the first century, but not the tendencies and movements of the nineteenth; the details of Christ's life in the past, but not the spirit of its application to the present, is to be an anachronism, a bit of theological or ecclesiastical antique, admired it may be for ancientness of aspect, but devoid of living

relationship with men and things. To revere the worthy in the past and reap from its well-tilled fields is sensible; but to bring out of it such a cloud of prejudices and prepossessions as blinds us to the true proportions of the present is folly. The man who is so enamoured of the bygone that he allows his own age to go by with scarce a nod of recognition is like one who lets down his nets in a secluded creek when the great shoal of fish has swept past him into the open sea. It is true, of course, that the teacher whose words are ahead of his time is somewhat similarly placed, but his position is far more hopeful; for life is travelling towards him, and in a while he will touch it, whereas the man who has let it pass will suffer increasing isolation, for human thought never returns permanently to the belief it has left behind. Let the preacher, then, be one who walks through life's multitude as his Master did, so distinct from it and yet in such entire sympathy with it, that all who touch even the hem of his garment shall know that virtue has passed from him to them.

III. SYMPATHY WITH GOD.

For the preacher to have sympathy with Nature and sympathy with Life, and to abstract from them unceasing supplies of vital force, will certainly enlarge his being, but he must go further, and, above and beyond all things else, live in sympathy with God. And here I desire to be carefully listened to, and clearly understood. Sympathy with God must not be interpreted, as it often is, as implying absence of sympathy with Nature and Life. Nature is not a machine that God constructed once on a time, and outside of which He has stood ever since, keeping it in order and watching it go. It is rather a living organism of which He is the moving and sustaining spirit. As has been ably stated by a modern theologian:—"There is an incomprehensible Force at the basis of all things—a Force whose nature is beyond the reach of human penetration. But it is not itself on that account outside the circle of nature, or separated from the life of man. Incomprehensible as it is, it is not yet uncomprehending. Incapable of being grasped by the human, it enfolds in itself the human and all other things. It transcends physical

nature, yet it dwells in that which it transcendsnay, is itself the cause of that which it transcends. Physical nature is one of its manifestations, as human life is another: neither of them can exhaust its meaning, yet each of them expresses a phase of its being. And this transcendental Force is not only present in nature, it is omnipresent. It not merely lies at the basis of great phenomena, it is the cause of all phenomena. To its action are to be referred all the forms of nature, all the modes of vitality, all the phases of evolution which the universe exhibits. The distinction is annihilated between great and small, for the great and the small alike have their origin in a source which transcends experience." This inscrutable Force behind and in all nature, is to us Christian believers the God revealed in Jesus Christ as the Father of our spirits. "In Him we live and move and have our being," or, as Paul again puts it, He is the "One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."

I have been insisting on the necessity of the preacher living in sympathy with his environment, and having reached spiritual environment, I want you to note specifically how our conception of that spiritual environment is revolutionised by the apprehension of this immanence of God in all things. Instead of consecrating only fragments of matter and time and space, localising our Bethels and Shechinahs, saying, "Lo! God is here!" or "Lo! God is there!" we henceforth look for Him in all things, and dwell with Him through all time. Some of the things around us, such as sanctuaries and what we call "means of grace," may be swifter and fuller vehicles for the transmission of His Spirit, but, while admitting this, we shall feel Him always, and behold Him everywhere. Having once grasped this idea, our religious life is no longer a straining to find God outside His creation, a struggle to bring Him down to us from the heavenly spaces; but a holy endeavour to keep our own being in such responsive attitudes that He will stream in upon us from every point and pore of the universe, especially from the glorious personality of that Christ who gathered up into Himself the fulness and power of the Divine Life, and gave it such embodiment and expression as are not to be met with elsewhere.

In this way, by drinking deep draughts of God from the whole of our environment, by living in such magnetic contact with the universe that every touch of its finger-tips will strike from us a responsive spark, by secreting from the great ocean of the temporal and the eternal, the human and the divine, the seen and the unseen that surges everlastingly around us, material for the building up of our spiritual structure and for the intensifying of its life, we shall make to ourselves a larger soul-a soul which, whether it pass into our sermons as the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire, or the still small voice, will be felt and known there as an emanation from the soul of God. So will the present world become to us like that city of which John wrote:- "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it;" and we ourselves shall speak to our congregations as "One having authority, and not as the Scribes."



THE PERSONALITY

OF THE PREACHER.



A strong glad river through the valley ran, A rush imperial in its hurrying feet; With shouting lips it did the sunrise greet, Nor stilled its pean when the night began. To Nature much it gave, and more to Man: Sap for his trees, gold plumelets for his wheat, Cool luscious shades for quenching summer heat, Great sunlit lengths for jaded eyes to scan. Dominion nor of drought nor frost it knew, Its channel wealthy to the quivering brim, Fed by the blood of rains and snows and dew That nursed their might in mountain gorges dim. So flows great teaching from the preacher true, Poured from eternal depths of soul in him. J. D.

- ' Produce great Persons, the rest follows."
- "The greater the reform needed, the greater the Personality you need to accomplish it."
- "Nothing endures but Personal qualities."

Walt Whitman.

## The Personality of the Preacher.

HE primary element in all work is the personality of the worker. Agents impart their quality to action; that which is done derives three-fourths of its significance from the character of the doer. The higher the nature of the work, the closer this sequence. Even the lower forms of manual labour cannot escape the impress of individuality. The stones on the highway, broken by one hand, to a discriminating eye will be differentiated from those broken by another. In mental labour this invasion of personality is much more obvious, especially when such labour takes a creative form. Two men, equally competent, may add up a column of figures with very little variation of method. And the difference will be a difference of method

only; it will not enter into the texture of the work. But let the same two men each write a poem on the dreams of a daisy, or the pathos in the life of birds, and the influence of their individuality will be much more marked. This arises from the fact that to add up a column of figures is simply a form of mental routine, while the writing of a poem is a creative act; and it seems to be a law of the universe that no soul, human or divine, can ever create without pouring some of itself into its creation, and leaving upon it the impress of its own being.

When the work to be accomplished is not only mental, but moral and spiritual, when it is work intended to appeal through the intellect to heart and conscience and will, then the question of personality assumes even greater importance. And such is the nature of our task as preachers. Our object is not only to enlighten the mind, but to arrest the conscience, to spiritualise the affections, to ennoble the life, according to the power supplied and the example afforded in Jesus Christ, and in the achievement of such an endeavour, the quality of our own being will exercise a

decidedly determining influence.

I. THE PREACHER'S PERSONALITY WILL AFFECT THE SELECTION OF HIS SUBJECT.

There are few topics that have received more attention from public teachers than the quality and method of reading. What books to select and what to avoid has formed a favourite and prolific field for the divagations of lecturers and authors. But, in spite of platform rhetoric and learned treatise and lists of the hundred best books, the million readers of the day are influenced chiefly by their individual preferences, and turn to *Tit-bits* or Thomas Carlyle, to Captain Marryat or George Meredith, to Butler's *Analogy* or *Three Men in a Boat*, not as they are directed from without, but as they are prompted from within.

And in like manner are preachers led to a selection of topics for the pulpit. The special needs of the day, or the prevalence of some evil in a congregation, or the counsel of some venerated authority may affect them occasionally, but such influence is incidental and temporary. The permanent factor is the general climate of their nature, not the slight variations in tempera-

ture and condition induced by merely passing and local causes. The man of devotional and experimental habit of mind will revel in the Psalms, the man of practical bent in the Book of Proverbs or the Epistle of James, the man of speculative and mystical turn in the Gospel and Revelation of St. John, while the man of theological and philosophical tendency will naturally gather many of his topics from the profundities of St. Paul. In this respect personality is the breakwater that shields us from the wave of uniformity; for men differ widely, and the more they cultivate that which gives them distinction and individuality, the more characteristic and varied will the selection of subjects for the pulpit become.

II. THE PERSONALITY OF THE PREACHER WILL AFFECT THE PREPARATION OF HIS SUBJECT.

Whether the topic selected is treated argumentatively, historically, devotionally, imaginatively, rhetorically, practically, or with a combination of all these, will depend more on his natural bent than on any external training or influence. Whether he reads widely round his

subject, whether he spends hours and days in quiet thought, or whether he relegates all thinking to the fugitive footholds of the few final moments, trusting in a haphazard fashion to what he misnames the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, will depend mainly on whether he is a man with sufficient veneration for himself to create in him a veneration for his congregation, and a due recognition of the claims they have upon his mental and moral best. Other influences will doubtless affect him somewhat. He may listen to a paper at a gathering of fellow-workers, or may have a stimulating conversation with a friend, or may peruse a treatise on preaching, and be so stirred as to set about the preparation of his subject in a manner altogether unusual, but the extent to which his action is moulded by such external influences will hinge on what he is in himself; and long after these temporary incitements have ceased to work, his personality will abide and rule. These are the fleeting clouds that fling a shadow on the lake, or the passing wind that sends a quiver through the trees, but what the man is in himself is the sun that always dominates

the sky and ceases not to reach and rule the earth.

III. THE PERSONALITY OF THE PREACHER WILL AFFECT THE PRESENTATION OF HIS SUBJECT.

When the topic has been wisely chosen and conscientiously prepared, then comes the most important and difficult task of all, that of placing it before the congregation in such a manner as to secure their sympathy and consideration. Here the personality of the preacher becomes a much more influential factor for two reasons:

## (1.) Because it is more widely diffused.

It spreads itself out so as to cover, not the delivery of a sermon merely, but the conduct of the entire service, from the announcement of the opening hymn to the utterance of the closing benediction. All the successive parts of the service will take their temperature from the pulpit, and whether they are to be cold and barren, or rich and fervent, will depend on the mental and spiritual tone of him who has them in charge. The architecture of the building, the quality of the singing, the size and demeanour of the congregation, will each lay a hand upon

the service, but none of these separately, nor all combined, will affect it so powerfully as the personality that reigns in the pulpit. Let that be feeble, and everything else will limp; let it be kingly, and the whole service will march with royal steps into the presence of God.

(2.) Because it is visible and conspicuously visible. In the selection and preparation of his subject, the preacher works behind the scenes, and his personality is felt only so far as it helps to mould and vitalise his thought, but, in delivering what he has prepared, he stands prominently on the stage—a stage on which he is the sole performer—and what he is, speaks quite as powerfully as what he says.

At the very beginning of a service, the personality of the preacher begets a predilection for or a prejudice against him. Let him be known as a man of sterling worth, of mental grasp, and high-toned Christian character, and his very appearance will act as an unspoken benediction. On the contrary, let him be known as one who has never won much respect in the street, and his entrance into the pulpit will send a rustle of

dissatisfaction through the congregation.

Even when a man is an entire stranger, his personality—that is, his physical, intellectual, and spiritual being, with all its visible outcome—will go far towards winning or repelling a congregation.

Personal appearance and manner are important items in this connection. Uncleanliness of person, slovenliness or vanity of attire, offensiveness of habit are out of place everywhere, but most of all in the pulpit.

What! will a man play tricks, will he indulge A silly, fond conceit of his fair form And just proportion, fashionable mien, And pretty face, in presence of his God? Or will he seek to dazzle me with tropes, As with the diamond on his lily hand, And play his brilliant part before my eyes When I am hungry for the bread of life?

So wrote the poet Cowper, and very wisely adds:—

For ghostly counsel, if it either fall Below the exigence, or be not backed With show of love, at least with hopeful proof Of some sincerity on the giver's part; Or be dishonoured in the exterior form And mode of its conveyance, by such tricks As move derision, or by foppish airs And histrionic mummery, that let down The pulpit to the level of the stage, Drops from the lips a disregarded thing.

The golden rule is that the personality of the preacher shall be obtruded on the congregation only so far as it will add dignity and force to his message. When this measure is exceeded and attention is drawn to him who speaks rather than to what is spoken, the work of the pulpit is marred. A gentleman, very anxious about the spiritual condition of a friend, took him one day to hear a popular minister. The sermon was eloquent, the preacher oratorical, and the gentleman fondly hoped a right impression had been produced. Fearful of dissipating the sacred influence, he made no remark as they walked down the street after the service, but was sadly disillusioned when his friend exclaimed, "Did you ever see such a coat? I would give five pounds to know that man's tailor."

So much for the visible; but it need hardly be pointed out that the invisible part of a preacher's personality will have a very considerable influence on the manner in which he presents the truth to his congregation. His mental habits, his moral qualities, his spiritual tone will all leave their impress for better or worse on his delivery. The

intellectual man will involuntarily appeal to the intellect, the practical man to the will, while the emotional man will just as naturally play upon the feelings. In the pulpit, as elsewhere, we say what we are, and the weight of our being will necessarily give a bias, weak or strong, to the the utterances of our lips.

The practical application of the considerations that have been adduced is obvious, but it will bear enforcement. If personality is so important an element in the work of the preacher, if it influences that work in so many directions, then it is plain that the cultivation of his personality should be to him a pressing and serious business.

Personality includes not only certain traits of mind and features of character, but all that we are, physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually. It is the sum of all our bodily and mental possessions, plus the informing soul; a living, breathing aggregate of all our capacities and potentialities; the animated and animating tout ensemble of our being.

For a certain share of this personality we are not individually responsible. It is partly an inheritance from past generations, partly a bestowment from present surroundings. Every man carries within him ancestors who, though long dead, yet speak. There are qualities of body and mind possessed by all of us for which blame or thanks are due to our father or mother, or it may be to our grandfather and grandmother, or to some even more remote progenitor. They are the gift of heredity or the outcome of environment.

But, while this is so, there is another, and that probably the major part of our personality, which is left for our own hands to mould or mar. Every preacher is gifted, within certain limits, with the power to determine whether he will be small or large, weak or strong, ignorant or intelligent, indolent or industrious, worldly or spiritual. Our personality may be likened to a country marked out for us on the map of Divine Providence, with its climate and configuration fixed by the Great Geographer, but with the peopling and cultivation of the soil and the uses to which we shall devote its products left within our own control.

With this responsibility in view, every wise

preacher will aim at the attainment of a personality unique and individual, a mental and moral quality that will differentiate him unmistakably from others. Dromios in the pulpit are not desirable. A man should be so much himself that even in the dark he could not be mistaken for anybody else. I remember a young man years ago who always caught the colour of the person he last admired. His nature was built up in layers of imitation, and if he could have been dug into at the end of a decade, so as to lay bare a section, there would have been found a stratified record of the men he had loved and copied each year. Such a method of self-building is hardly commendable. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but it is not productive of strength and reality-two qualities most essential in the pulpit. A man had better lie in an obscure corner on the world's library shelf, content with his own text and type and binding, than be a widely-exhibited, large-paper, broad-margin, calfbound second edition of somebody else. If our personality is only a small island, let us rejoice in it and make the most of it, rather than try



to convert it into a continent by appropriating the possessions of other people. A man will be much more highly respected, and will accomplish far more effective service, even as a pigmy, than if he swells himself into a giant by putting on one suit after another of the clothes of those around him.

But while a wise preacher will strive to be himself, he will endeavour strenuously to avoid becoming stereotyped. His personality will be of a growing progressive kind. This is only another way of saying that he will be alive; for one of the most unmistakable signs of life is growth. He who lives must grow, he who grows not has ceased to live.

In every living preacher there will be mental growth. His intellectual personality, small, perhaps, at the beginning as a grain of mustard seed, will rise and spread until it becomes a tree, in the branches of which great birds of thought will make their nests. There is no finality in the truth we preach, or at any rate there is no finality in our apprehension of it.

The truth that yesterday was mine
Is vaster truth to-day,
Its face has aspect more divine,
Its kingship fuller sway:
For truth must grow as ages roll,
And God looms larger in the soul.

An interesting consideration grows out of this. The study of history would seem to show that to each age there is entrusted the task of bringing into more decided prominence a certain aspect of the truth of God. To our fathers there was committed the insistence on the need and possibility of individual salvation. That phase of truth was most earnestly and effectively enforced by the agents who were mainly instrumental in bringing about the evangelical revival in the times of Wesley, as well as by their successors. Nor are we to let it go; for progress does not consist in the substitution of one truth for another, but in the discovery of wider aspects of truth one after another. In this way "God broadens out, each breadth of life to meet." We are not mounting a ladder, each rung of which is cut away as the foot touches the next. We are rather building a stairway in which the later steps are based upon the earlier, in which the lower form a foundation for and an introduction to the higher. If our fathers insisted on the necessity of individual regeneration, so must we; supplementing it with that view of the truth which contemplates the collective, social well-being of man. This aspect of the gospel could not have been presented earlier, inasmuch as the world was not prepared for it. Men had to be aggregated by history, and organised and socialised by the various integrating forces at work among them, before those wider applications of religious teaching could have vogue which are one of the leading features of the pulpit of to-day.

This point need not be elaborated. It has been adverted to in order to illustrate the need of a growing personality. If a man is not to become wooden, or even something more unyielding, he must keep his mind open to the changes occurring around him, and his heart in sympathy with every healthy onward movement.

It has pained me to notice two things in regard to many preachers, both ministerial and lay. I have observed, first, that it is possible for a man to read widely, and for that reading to give an interest and breadth to his conversation in private, but to fail entirely in affecting his ministrations in public. There are men who in this respect are like a ship built in water-tight compartments. They have a section of their being for home employment, and another for pulpit use, with an impervious partition between them, so that what affects the one is never allowed to pass into the other. Not a desirable condition in which to live. It cuts a man in two, and the half that enters the pulpit is always enfeebled for want of the half that stays at home. Congregations are not greatly stirred by listening to half-men of this sort. The work of preaching is of such moment, and so difficult withal, that the whole of a man, all that he is and all that he can become, is needed to back up what he says.

A second thing I have observed among preachers is, that it is not uncommon for them to have a living personality, and to grow rapidly and well for a series of years, and then to come to a standstill. They flow on like a river for many miles, wearing their own channel, singing their own song, refreshing their own meadows.

and then, to the amazement and disappointment of those who rejoiced in their progress, they empty themselves into a lake of physical sloth, or mental ease, or conservative calm, and are heard of no more. Heaven save us from such a fate! If the babble we make be but infantile, and the track we wear in the soil hardly perceptible, let us cling to them, and never allow ourselves to be swallowed up in any Dead Sea of physical or mental stagnation.

Live out the good that's in thee,
And larger good will grow;
Let truth's high summits win thee,
And higher thou shalt know;
He claimeth kinship with the blest
Who always gives the world his best.

But, if there is such need to maintain an open and progressive mind, there is even greater necessity that the spiritual side of our personality should not be allowed to decline in freshness and vigour. The life and growth of the intellect are of immense importance, but will become a source of weakness and danger, if not accompanied by the advancement of the soul in moral attainment, in spiritual perception, in Christly instinct and sentiment. The force of

our personality as preachers lies in our fellowship with Christ. Without Him we can do nothing. With Him we can do all things. As behind the teachings of the man of science lie all the wonders and treasures of the material world, and behind the visions of the poet all the beauties of nature glorified with the light of imagination, so behind the personality of the true preacher lie all the force and inspiration of Christ's work and kingdom and person. What we have to preach is not Christianity so much as Christ. All our views of Christian doctrine, Christian ethics, Christian privilege, must be gained from His standpoint, and saturated with His spirit, and that can only be realised as we are filled with that spirit ourselves. Abiding in Him, His words will abide in us, and will go forth from us energised, not only by the force of our own individuality, but by the might of His Spirit who spoke "as one having authority. and not as the Scribes."

Nothing is of such vital moment to the preacher as the attainment of a rich, strong, broad, living, holy personality. A wealthy personality, affluent

110

in mental vigour and spiritual fervour, is the secret of all success in preaching. Analyse the biographies of the past, study the great preachers of the present, and you will discover that wherever the pulpit makes a permanent mark, it does so, not by its theology, orthodox or otherwise, but by the individuality of the man through whom the theology gains an utterance. The greatest power, and the greatest need of the pulpit, are not oratory, nor learning, nor dogma, but Christian manhood. When the preacher who stands there is one of rich and glowing personality, then every utterance vibrates with the quiver of his own abounding life. In a nobly egotistic sense himself is his message, and his message is himself.

I go to the sanctuary on a Sunday morning. In the pulpit stands a professional. A man of ability perhaps, and readiness of utterance; a man of correctness possibly, and taste, and the strictest orthodoxy; a man bristling it may be with every scholastic requirement and theological equipment, but in whom you would have to search a millenium to discover a soul. A man

in whom acquirement is at the maximum, and human nature at the minimum. A man who has made fine sermons for years, but has never made a self to preach them. A man who masters his subject, but never allows it to master him; indeed, the subject could not do it, there is no "him" to master. I sit in my pew and listen, and what is it like? It is like a cold, crystal river, flowing along the smooth bare channel cut for it by many chisels through the heart of a granite rock. The stream is placid, pellucid, faultless in its flow, but without character and without power, and I return home like one whom the water has laved with a silken hand, when he ought to have felt the dash of its spray, and been made to pant and glow amid the friendly conflict of its current.

I go again to the sanctuary on another Sabbath morning. In the pulpit stands one, wise, eloquent, learned, devout. His words stir, rouse, fasten, sometimes even thrill. But it is not his wisdom, nor his eloquence, nor his learning, nor his devoutness that grips me, so much as his nature, his being, his self. There is something behind

all his endowments, a subtle, ethereal indefinable influence that pervades and suffuses all he does. It is a brimming over of the soul, an inundation of the preacher's personality beneath which I bend and wonder. I sit in my pew and listen, and what is it like? It is like the flow of a mountain torrent, turbid, irregular, unconventional, brown with its passage over the peaty soil of the moors, but living, strong, bracing, laden and coloured with the wealth of the highlands from which it has come, and bearer of rich deposits to the natures over which it flows.

The power of a strong personality receives striking illustration in an incident related of a modern American poet. His biographer tells of a certain young man who went to see the poet—being already familiar with his works—"and who, by means of only a casual and ordinary talk was filled with a strange physical and spiritual exaltation, which lasted for some weeks; and what is still more impressive, however, it is added that the young fellow's whole tenour of life was altered by this slight contact,—and that his character, outer life, and entire spiritual

being were elevated and purified in a very remarkable way."

A personality of that sort, rich in intellectual and spiritual influence, should be desired and sought after by all preachers. Let us make to ourselves a large soul. Our mission is to form the souls of others, not only the soul of the individual, but the soul of the community, the soul of the nation, the soul of the world, and we shall do it better the larger and nobler we are ourselves. By healthy physical exercise, by wide reading, by patient thinking, by ample intercourse with men, by constant communion with God, by a keen sympathy with life in all its modes and moods and phases, let us create for ourselves a personality that will lie like a sea underneath all we think and say and do, and upon whose surface not a bird shall rest, nor a weed float, nor a sunbeam play, nor a swimmer lean, without feeling something of the breath and swell and urgency of the under-heaving waters.

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## BRADFORD:

J. S. Toothill, Printer, 71, Godwin Street.



Dawson, Joseph.

The soul of the sermon and The personality of the preacher / by Joseph Dawson. -- London Simpkin, Marshall, 1894.

71p.; 18cm.

1. Preaching--Addresses, essays, lectures.
I. Dawson, Joseph. The personality of the preacher. II. Title. III. Title: The person of the preacher.

32948

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